

## **White House Conference on Aging Regional Input Form**

### **Post Event Summary Report**

Name of Event: White House Conference on Aging Issues Forum

Date of Event: June 7, 2005

Location of Event: San Antonio, Texas

Number of Persons Attending: 87

Sponsoring Organization: Alamo Area Council of Governments – Bexar Area Agency on Aging

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### **Planning Along the Lifespan ISSUE ONE: SOCIAL SECURITY**

**General Description:** A large number of surveys include comments about Social Security, lack of funding, COLA's being inadequate, and a general sense that Social Security is being diverted by the federal government to other programs such as defense spending.

#### **Barriers:**

1. Media promotes negative images and perpetuates the fear of the unknown and resistance to change.
2. People believe that Social Security is their retirement plan.
3. Employment issues – major companies no longer have pension plans and layoffs occur affecting older workers.
4. For many seniors, Social Security is their only income, creating long- term financial challenges and uncertainty.
5. Children have to hold two jobs to make ends meet, leaving little time or financial resources to care for elderly parents.

#### **Recommendations or Solutions:**

1. A bipartisan approach in Congress to addressing the solvency issues with Social Security is needed.
2. Education of the general public of the need to plan their own retirement, including but not solely based on Social Security.
3. Many survey responses cite the need for higher Social Security payments and greater benefits under Medicare & Medicaid.

WHCoA : Alamo-Bexar-Golden Crescent Regional Report  
Summary & Prioritization of Issues  
June 28, 2005

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4. Raise the retirement age for Social Security.

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### **Planning Along the Lifespan ISSUE TWO: EDUCATION**

**General Description:** Create a viable education system that includes awareness of aging issues, fraud/abuse for everyone, employers/employees, and starts early at the middle school level to teach options available and how to find options.

**Barriers:**

1. General lack of interest
2. Fitting this topic into current curriculum
3. Funding
4. Getting people to report fraud/exploitation
5. Media portrays negative image
6. System set up now can be hard to work with

**Recommendations or Solutions:**

1. Add this topic to current classes. Include special projects, and a scholarship initiatives.
2. Promote positive media images
3. Educate teachers

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### **Planning Along the Lifespan ISSUE THREE: FINANCIAL PLANNING**

**General Description:** Create awareness of long term care insurance options, pensions, transition options and professional integrity issues. Also, create awareness of fraud/abuse/exploitation and insure that it is prosecuted.

#### **Barriers:**

1. People don't have good concept of financial management principles.
2. Credit card companies targeting college age kids.
3. Difficult to understand various policies.
4. People don't educate themselves or take the time to do so.
5. The cost of secondary insurance is great.
6. It is getting more and more difficult for older Texans to find a program that will help them do long term planning. As Texans live longer, we are not developing programs to help with the gradual transition of long term care. We need to develop a program in which we can help older Texans with the least restrictive intervention and to come up with proactive solutions rather than reactive crisis solutions. Middle class individuals do not have programs in place to help with this transition of independent living-assistive living-placement. Families would benefit from a supportive and informative program.

#### **Recommendations and Solutions:**

1. Develop educational outreach program through multiple outlets including community groups, schools, community education opportunities, etc. to get information to the public about the need to plan for retirement and long-term care.
2. Encourage companies to include information in retirement seminars regarding funding options for long term care.
3. Establish a program that would consist of an agency actively and aggressively assisting families/individuals with long term planning and information/referral.

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### **Planning Along the Lifespan ISSUE FOUR: FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO MEET BASIC LIVING EXPENSES**

**General Description: Inadequate financial resources to meet basic living expenses.**

**Barriers:**

1. Expenses go up and income does not.
2. Electricity costs are high.
3. Persons under 65 with disabling condition have to go on Medicare (as opposed to Medicaid) and lose their drug benefit.
4. Low income Texans only qualify for \$10/month in food stamps and this hasn't changed in 20 years.

**Recommendations or Solutions:**

1. Financial assistance for prescriptions.
2. Freeze costs (taxes) for seniors.
3. Establish income criteria for Older Americans Act programs so funding can be stretched.
4. Increase food stamp allotment for eligible elderly persons.

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### **The Workplace of the Future ISSUE ONE: INCREASE ABILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PERSONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JOB MARKET**

**General Description:** Workplace options need to be expanded that take advantage of current technology to increase options available for senior workers, caregivers, and persons with disabilities to increase their ability to participate in the job market.

**Barriers:**

1. Workplace options, i.e. telecommuting, job sharing, are not widely available.
2. Employers need to be educated on the benefits on employing older workers.

**Recommendations and Proposed Solutions:**

1. Work with employers to increase workplace options available for older workers; i.e., telecommuting, part time work, job sharing.
2. Form partnerships of local entities including faith based and corporate entities to provide job/technology training for seniors reentering the workplace to include interviewing skills, job coaching, etc.
3. Market senior employment opportunities (separate division with Workforce programs).
4. Offer senior career services symposium/program.
5. Encourage older worker's employment with temporary agencies
6. Provide financial incentives, tax breaks, for employers for hiring senior adults.
7. Continue to fund Senior Employment Program.

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### **The Workplace of the Future**

#### **ISSUE TWO: IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION SO SENIORS CAN GET TO JOB SITES**

**General Description:** Transportation is not available to be able to get to work.  
**Improvements to sidewalks needed to allow seniors to get to public transportation.**

#### **Recommendation or Solution**

1. Increase public transportation opportunities for seniors by eliminating infrastructure barriers.
2. Develop opportunities for intergenerational driving programs.

## **White House Conference on Aging Regional Input Form**

### **Our Community**

#### **ISSUE ONE: FRAGMENTED SYSTEM OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**General Description:** Access to information is fragmented and not easy to obtain for seniors and their caregivers. A senior one-stop center is needed to aide in the dissemination of information to our community.

#### **Barriers:**

1. Funding
2. Resources
3. Outreach
4. Virtual access

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. Build on already established programs/coalitions.
2. Obtain grant to fund graduate students to develop infrastructure.
3. Obtain funding to purchase software package to house resource and client database.
4. Utilize best practices for public relations program to include public service announcements, senior reporters, and coupons with utility companies, etc.



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### **Our Community**

#### **ISSUE TWO: Current senior programs not always meeting the needs of the community**

##### **General Description**

Barriers:

1. Older Americans Act needs to be revised.
2. Accountability for current programs.
3. Funding for evaluation activities

##### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. Review Older Americans Act for applicability to coming Baby Boomer population and suggest necessary changes.
2. Develop program evaluation process to evaluate current senior programs and their viability and relevance to community.
3. Promote passage of Elder Justice Act – Federal law needed to protect seniors.
4. Conduct community needs assessment.

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### **Our Community**

#### **ISSUE THREE: CASE MANAGEMENT & HOME HEALTH SERVICES**

**General Description: increase availability of case management services and community based home health services.**

**Barriers:**

1. Funding

**Proposed Solutions:**

1. Increase number of case management staff available at faith based agencies/churches, AAA, One Stop Center, City of San Antonio, Home Health agencies.
2. Increase funding for services to caregivers to provide necessary supports to continue care giving activities.
3. Increase funding for community based home health, including pay incentives for home health aides and Certified Nursing Assistants.
4. Increase incentives for Medicare home visits.
5. Develop opportunities for increase telemedicine opportunities in our community.

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### **Our Community ISSUE FOUR: QUALITY OF LIFE IN COMMUNITIES**

**General Description: Maintain community and environmental resources for use in future generations.**

#### **Barriers**

1. Water-cities are growing and so is the extravagant use of water.
2. Litter-Lack of respect for the environment

#### **Recommendations and Solutions:**

1. Create rewards for conserving, such as reductions on water bills; and require more financial compensation for luxury, tourist and non-essential uses of water.
2. Recycling-Increase public participation, educate everyone and initiate negative consequences to motivate people not to litter.

## **White House Conference on Aging Regional Input Form**

### **Health and Long Term Living ISSUE ONE: FUNDING**

**General Description: Lack of adequate funding is seen as the major barrier to good health and productive long term living.**

#### **Barriers:**

1. Dramatic increase in health care costs and prescription drugs
2. Local, state, and national policies
3. More people need help which stretches resources
4. Lack of health care workers and incentives for people to work
5. Lack of adequate funding for community-based programs.
6. Inadequate supply of alternatives to nursing homes or institutional care.
7. Very limited mental health services.
8. Seniors lose assets if they become ill for a long time.

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. Employer incentives (wellness programs)
2. Increased Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement levels
3. Increase in available community based care
4. Extend caregiver funding for grandparents
5. Renew rehabilitation benefit (Outpatient Rehabilitation Act 2005)
6. Extend hospice benefit period.
7. Extend medical benefits for chronically ill.
8. Increased funding for prescription drug coverage.
9. Visitor Programs for foreign workers
10. Paid internships for college students
11. Incentives for volunteers (tax breaks)
12. Redirecting funds directed to foreign services/defense to local services
13. Put a cap on drug costs to lower prices
14. Increase information on options for those in need so they don't have to choose between medicine and food.
15. Rescind the tax cuts and put the money in Social Security and Medicare
16. Support Adult Day Care facilities with Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements.
17. Increase the Cost of Living Adjustment
18. Educate legislature on high cost of health benefits for seniors on fixed incomes.
19. Increase in scope of mental health services for depression.
20. Social Security and Medicare funds are equally provided to those elderly who need them and those elderly who don't. Maybe the government should require that a certain group of retirees who have an abundance of savings/properties/etc. not be entitled to 100% of benefits, possibly 50% to provide more funding for those who cannot survive without them.
21. While I support assisting foreign nations in becoming democratic, I feel that we are spending too much money outside our own country. We need to reevaluate the spending we are doing and assist those who have paid taxes their whole lives and now need our help. The recent Medicare drug package is way too complex and helps very few people. It needs to be simplified and truly provide some help to those who have built our nation.

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### **Health and Long Term Living ISSUE TWO: EDUCATION**

**General Description:** lack of education among employers and health care professionals on the dynamics of aging and family caregiving.

**Barriers:**

- Accept personal lack of accountability of physicians
- Decline in number of physicians accepting Medicaid and Medicare due to cutbacks and ever-rising limitations to coverage.

**Proposed Solutions:**

1. Increase education for medical community and individuals (Geriatric training-individuals)
2. Target ageism – insure young people interact with older adults; examine media messages.
3. Employers need to be supported /monitored in hiring older workers
4. Recognize loss of value/knowledge of older workers
5. Include wellness and treatment alternatives
6. Educate doctors to be more attentive to health issues of seniors.

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### **Health and Long Term Living ISSUE THREE: WELLNESS**

**General Description: Wellness (Health is a life long commitment)**

**Barriers:**

1. Sedentary lifestyles.
2. Acceptance of personal responsibility.

**Proposed Solutions:**

1. All Ages need comprehensive program to include: physical fitness, nutrition, and lifestyle.
2. Wellness as a commitment of whole community:
  - Schools
  - Local government/Neighborhoods
  - Corporations/Employers
  - Individuals
  - Churches
3. Educate older adults about ways they can improve their own health through diet and exercise.

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### **Social Engagement ISSUE ONE: INVOLVEMENT OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN AGING WELL**

**General Description: Increased community involvement of faith-based institutions and churches.**

**Barriers:**

1. Lack of education of church leaders and staff.
2. Compartmentalized sense of community
3. Lack of federal seed money for senior programs/parish nursing
4. Separation of church and state
5. Liability issues

**Proposed Solutions:**

1. Funding for volunteer training and education.
2. Intergenerational activities
3. Churches as social service entry points, to include awareness activities
4. Base non-profit status on community involvement.

## **White House Conference on Aging Regional Input Form**

### **Social Engagement ISSUE TWO: DRIVING/TRANSPORTATION**

**General Description: Misconceptions about senior drivers and lack of public transportation.**

**Barriers:**

1. Misconceptions about senior drivers as unsafe.
2. Lacking of funding for driving courses for seniors
3. Lack of public transportation
4. Liability of volunteer drivers/lack of gas stipends.
5. Health problems impact reaction time and eyesight.

**Proposed Solutions:**

1. Promote AARP course for older drivers.
2. Promote awareness and education of new laws
3. Provide sources of transportation for non drivers, especially for medical and social reasons
4. Test everyone over 70.



## **White House Conference on Aging Regional Input Form**

### **Social Engagement ISSUE THREE: ISOLATION**

**General Description:** Need opportunities for shared housing and volunteer activities.

**Barriers:**

1. Cost of background checks for shared housing
2. Lack of transportation for seniors to attend activities or volunteer
3. Lack of meaningful volunteer opportunities and training

**Proposed Solutions:**

1. Shared housing availability
2. Promote volunteer /tutoring opportunities
3. Create meaningful volunteer service and recognition.

## **White House Conference on Aging Regional Input Form**

### **Marketplace ISSUE ONE: TRANSPORTATION**

**General Description:** Transportation is seen as the most pressing issue. This issue includes a number of items including the current boundaries for the public transportation system, qualification for para- transit services, need for escort services, support for volunteer transportation programs, and cost of private transportation services.

#### **Barriers:**

1. Access – location of bus stops and advance reservation system.
2. Urban sprawl
3. Waiting areas for public transportation
4. Degraded sidewalks or lack of sidewalks in some areas
5. Funding
6. Older driver education – the attitude toward giving up driving
7. Costs – how much it costs the consumer
8. Fear about utilizing public transportation system.

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. Provide other sources of funding, such as grants and tax-supported methods.  
Bexar County is less than in other metro areas of Texas.
2. Supports for additional sources of transportation – volunteers, private providers.
3. Coordination of transportation resources
4. Medicare beneficiaries get information about transportation opportunities when they become eligible for Medicare and get initial information.
5. Consumer support – public transportation.
6. Transportation information given by 211.
7. Light Rail
8. Other solutions for rural areas include telemedicine/visiting physicians and grants/funding targeted to rural areas.

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### **Marketplace ISSUE TWO: HOUSING OPTIONS**

**General Description: Increase supply of a wide variety of housing environments for seniors.**

#### **Barriers:**

1. Lack of communities where you can age in place.
2. Lack of sidewalks and neighborhoods where you can walk to stores and volunteer opportunities.
3. Housing not linked to transportation.
4. Retirement communities not always affordable.
5. Lack of planning for disability/accessibility in housing design.
6. Lack of appropriate subsidized housing, such as assisted living. Inability for people to age in place in subsidized housing.
7. Age Integration
8. Lack of resources for home modification and repair.
8. Housing Authority apartments are old and need repairs. There is inadequate maintenance personnel and resources to repair public housing.

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. More funding for housing subsidies and repair grants. Institutional care is more costly.
2. Better coordination of available funding for section 8 vouchers, etc.
3. Utility subsidies or freeze on utility payment similar to tax freeze for seniors.
4. Builders address accessibility issues in housing design.
5. Demand variety of housing options.
6. Develop partnerships between builders and senior and disability advocates

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### **Marketplace**

#### **ISSUE THREE: TECHNOLOGY TO INCLUDE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING**

##### **Barriers:**

1. Expectations of Baby Boomers
2. Product Labels that are difficult to read.
3. Lack of standardization of electronic devices (ATM's, Debit/Credit devices)
4. Marketing geared to younger population (Driven by whose spending the money)

##### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. Age Friendly Product Design (Human Factors)
2. Use State of the Art technology in adaptive devices (i.e., wheelchairs)
3. De-stigmatize the use of technology.
4. Increase affordability of assistive devices.
5. Increase funding for people for home modification and maintenance.